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Further strengthen the Oust Arroyo Movement

The Arroyo ruling clique is declining at an ever faster pace. Calls for Arroyo's resignation or ouster are becoming more widespread as the regime's isolation worsens. Simultaneously, the revolutionary movement is advancing more vigorously. The regime's stubborn efforts to remain in power contribute to the regime's further erosion and intensify the crisis of the ruling system. They provide greater opportunities for the Oust Arroyo Movement to further advance and gain strength and depth.

The past two weeks have witnessed the explosion of long simmering rifts and collisions at the very center of Arroyo's rule. The mass resignation on July 8 of 10 members of Arroyo's cabinet who were in charge of various major socio-economic branches of government dealt a serious blow to the Arroyo clique. Those who resigned have gradually been disclosing what they know of the regime's many covert criminal, antipeople and antinational acts and have threatened to tell all at the proper time.

The ruling coalition is rapidly disintegrating. The senate president and a faction of the Liberal Party, an important pillar of the ruling coalition have already abandoned the Arroyo clique. Millions of pesos in bribe money have simply not been enough to maintain the loyalty of all political parties and Arroyo allies. A powerful section of the big comprador bourgeoisie has likewise already withdrawn its support and



called for Arroyo's resignation. There is massive unrest within the military and police. There are high-ranking officers of the AFP just waiting for the right moment to bolt along with big numbers of troops under their command. Many retired officers have likewise openly expressed their opposition to Arroyo.

Even the US has been forced to distance itself from its increasingly inutile puppet while wringing what it could from it and quietly drawing up solutions that would hopefully cause the least upheaval to the ruling system.

The reactionary government's paralysis grows worse by the day, if not by the hour. Malacañang has done nothing but parry the people and its political rivals' intensifying hatred and condemnation, concoct excuses for every single transgression by the regime that has come to light, hatch up schemes to malign the regime's opponents and muddle the issues. It has likewise come up with all sorts of hollow gimmickry to prettify Arroyo's image which has been trampled underfoot in the streets.

In her search for different means to escape ac-

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countability, prevent a widespread people's uprising, evade the people's judgment and maintain herself in power as long as possible, Arroyo's ruling regime has offered several proposals purportedly to solve the crisis. She diverts the people's attention through the charter change (cha-cha) and Truth Commission schemes, even as she challenges the opposition to resolve the issues through the impeachment process, hoping that her regime can maintain control over these means.

The situation, however, has long slipped out of the ruling Arroyo clique's control. It mistakenly believes that it can prevent the stinking truth from coming out, that it can still befuddle the people's minds and derail the latter from taking action against it, thus prolonging its hold on power.

The protest movement is surging forward along with growing calls for the regime's ouster. Since June, more numerous forms of protest have emerged and become more widespread. Protest actions in Metro Manila and in several regions, including Cebu—touted to

be Arroyo country—have grown stronger, bigger and more intense. The ever bigger rallies show the extent of the people's disgust for the regime.

No amount of threats, deception or derision on the part of the regime can prevent the people from pouring out into the streets and continuously launching various forms of protest on a daily basis.

But it will take the full raging force and the powerful blows of a gigantic people's movement to topple a regime that stubbornly clings to power.

The progressive and revolutionary forces must raise their level of cooperation and work even harder alongside the broad anti-Arroyo united front to muster the people's gathering strength and pour it out into the streets. More effort must be expended to expand and strengthen severalfold the anti-Arroyo mass movement and united front and to accelerate the momentum of protest. It is the continuously growing strength of the anti-Arroyo mass movement that will convince ever growing numbers of people to join protests and encour-

age other influential sectors to make a stand and take action to oust the Arroyo regime.

It is the strength of the anti-Arroyo mass movement that will likewise create even bigger rifts within the ruling clique, win over or neutralize many more of Arroyo's supporters in congress and other branches of government, and undermine Arroyo's hold on the AFP and PNP. Even the effectiveness of impeachment as an arena of struggle for the anti-Arroyo movement stems from the strength and power achieved by the ouster movement outside of congress.

Along with combining various tactics and activities, it is necessary to unify the broadest possible ranks of the anti-Arroyo movement on the need to resolve the people's most basic problems, especially those of the basic masses, and to identify what the most appropriate arrangement would be to immediately replace the present regime's corrupt, puppet and fascist rule.

With their active participation in the anti-Arroyo movement, the militant organized masses and the people in their broadest numbers, especially the basic sectors of society, will have the capability to demand meaningful solutions to basic problems as well as to their particular grievances, and relate their own struggles with the overall struggle to overthrow the Arroyo regime. It is their participation that will ensure the depth of the broad movement for Arroyo's ouster. It will also ensure that any alternative to the corrupt, puppet and fascist regime addresses the national and democratic aspirations of the impoverished majority and the entire people, and not just the few who will take the place of the country's current reactionary rulers.

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Portents of the Arroyo regime's imminent end

The events of July 8 descended on Malacañang like a ravaging storm. That morning, seven cabinet members and three agency heads quit their posts and called on Gloria Arroyo to resign as well. They declared that the president was no longer morally fit to lead the government.

Those who resigned stated their readiness to submit to any legal process and disclose everything they knew about anomalies in government in the interest of ferreting out the truth and securing Arroyo's ouster from power. They were enraged at Arroyo, especially since she blamed them for her "apology" last June, which turned out to be a huge fiasco. They also disclosed that the use of "muscle" against the Oust Arroyo Movement was an option discussed in one of their cabinet meetings.

One by one, allies withdrew their support, including those who, only a few days earlier, stood solidly behind the administration. By noontime, a faction of the pro-administration Liberal Party had withdrawn its support, called for Arroyo's resignation, and backed the filing of an impeachment case against her.

By afternoon, former president Corazon "Cory" Aquino aired her call for Arroyo to step down.

The Makati Business Club, a group that had erstwhile supported the administration, also followed suit, with its leaders deciding to join the people's call for Arroyo's resignation.

Meanwhile, various opposition groups and progressive organizations had gathered in Makati to demand Arroyo's removal from power.

Malacañang was in a somber mood. A sullen-faced president avoided the media's cameras.

Palace functionaries scrambled to gather support for the president and show the media that Arroyo was unflinching. All afternoon, Arroyo's fiercest defenders within congress and the cabinet did nothing but hold press conferences to ward off the effects of the tempest that was raging outside the Palace.

Before nightfall, former president Fidel Ramos showed up in Malacañang to express support for the administration. He presented his proposal for charter change (*cha-cha*) as the solution to the present political crisis and a means of providing Arroyo a graceful exit from her criminal accountabilities. Under the Ramos scheme, a parliamentary system of government would be adopted, elections would be held, and Arroyo would quietly relinquish power within a six-month transition period.

Several days later, Jose de Venecia brazenly peddled the plan to all of the traditional political parties. Both Ramos and de Venecia harbor ambitions of becoming prime minister, hence their enthusiastic promotion of the parliamentary system.

Arroyo pounced on the *cha-cha* scheme to divert the people's attention, but refused to accept it as a compromise formula or exit strategy. She insisted on remaining in power until the end of her term in 2010. Progressive groups, the op-

position and the Catholic church immediately condemned the scheme.

As the conflicts built up, everyone watched and waited on the 10th of July on what the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' (CBCP) stand on the issues would be. Contrary to earlier expectations, the bishops did not call for Arroyo's resignation. However, neither did they oppose it.

Malacañang opportunistically rode on the CBCP's fence-sitting. Arroyo thanked the bishops and

misrepresented the church's statement as a declaration in favor of her government. A few days later, the bishops clarified that their statement was not a defense of Arroyo. In fact, former president Aquino even cited the bishops' statement as basis for reiterating her call for Arroyo to resign.

In the next several days, local politicians, especially from the Visayas withdrew their support. The declaration of Cebuano politicians that Cebu was not "Arroyo country" was the biggest insult to Arroyo, as was the withdrawal of support by a number of governors, mayors and political parties in Iloilo, Aklan, Samar and Leyte. More local officials are expected to distance themselves from the regime in the future.

Several other cabinet members and lower-ranking officials have resigned their posts, among them Presidential Adviser on Poverty Al-



leviation Vicky Gachitoren and Special Adviser on Investments Corazon Guidote.

Students, professionals and other sectors have also issued a stream of manifestos against Arroyo.

Meantime, the worsening rift within the administration also raises hopes for the impeachment process to gain momentum. According to the opposition's latest calculation, 75-80 members of congress already support impeachment, thereby making it easier to reach the minimum 79 needed to automatically endorse the case to the senate.

To further disrupt the impeachment process and derail mass actions calling for her ouster, Arroyo exploited calls from the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for the formation of a Truth Commission. Her political opponents and progressives immediately rejected the proposition, with the CBCP likewise refusing to join the process.

In any event, the serious rifts besetting the ruling clique have been laid bare before the public. AB

Clinging like a leech indeed

"Joseph Estrada wants to have both Gloria Arroyo and Fidel Ramos killed and blame it on the Left." Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson made this exposé on July 14 without even batting an eyelash. It was the latest, most ineffectual attempt to divert the people's attention from Arroyo's crimes. Chavit's "proof" consisted of a manufactured taped conversation where Estrada is heard talking to an unknown man about the alleged plans. Then, on July 20, the PNP released a CD supposedly featuring a conversation between Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal and a CPP official about an alleged NPA plan to stage a "miracle" to coincide with the big rallies scheduled during Arroyo's SONA on July 25. If they weren't such an insult to the people's intelligence, these tall tales would have been so hilarious.

These contrived stories are but part of the overall propaganda campaign to maintain Arroyo in power. They go hand in hand with a smear campaign against her political opponents and a public relations drive to improve Arroyo's image.

Focusing on the smear campaign are Mike Defensor and Raul Gonzalez, whose constant insults and lies have spared no one, not even actress Kris Aquino.

Noted movie director Lupita Kashiwahara and her pricey Hong Kong-based company as well as Arroyo's former campaign manager Marita Jimenez play major roles in Arroyo's public relations drive. Kashiwahara and Jimenez have been relentlessly working round the clock in the hope of covering up the regime's overwhelming notoriety and prettifying its image in the eyes of the people. While Kashiwahara directs all of Arroyo's public appearances (including her "apology" and her stroll by the Manila Bay), Jimenez is busy organizing "visits to Malacañang" by everyone who owes Arroyo political debts and planning rallies to demonstrate that Arroyo still enjoys the support of the majority and remains effective in governance. AB

Protest actions in the country and abroad

Protest rallies have grown larger and become more frequent not only in Metro Manila but in big cities and town centers nationwide and even in main cities worldwide with big Filipino communities. This, despite the derision and scorn heaped by the Arroyo regime on these rallies and their organizers. The protest actions belie the regime's claims that the people are tired of attending rallies and hence another people's uprising can never take place. The demonstrations also prove that the people can never be fooled into believing the farfetched and ludicrous notions being spread by the Philippine National Police (PNP) that the New People's Army (NPA) or the terrorist

Abu Sayyaf are set to disrupt the rallies.

Various sectors launched protest actions in quick succession in the past several days. Five thousand women marched in Makati City on July 19. On July 20, the Gloria Step-down Movement (GSM) launched a noise barrage in Cubao, Quezon City and in Manila, Malabon and other cities nationwide. They were in preparation for nationally coordinated mass actions that would coincide with Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 25.

On July 13, up to 80,000 people gathered in Makati City to demand that Gloria Arroyo relinquish power. For the first time, Susan Roces, widow of Fernando Poe, Jr.,



Arroyo's fiercest rival in the past election made an appearance and gave a speech. Though they were from different groups and political stripes, the rallyists collectively expressed their disgust for Arroyo through speeches, poems, songs, dances, movements and chants.

To prevent the outpouring of support for the rally from nearby provinces, the PNP set up checkpoints along the major thoroughfares leading to Metro Manila. Policemen arbitrarily blocked vehicles that they suspected were carrying rallyists to Makati City. For the flimsiest reasons, soldiers and police halted up to 67 jeeps and a number of buses carrying rallyists. The local government of Manila threatened people from attending the rally. That same day, the PNP arrested Bayan Muna organizer Protacio "Jesi" Carandang of Sta. Ana, Manila while he was calling on residents in the area to join the rally in Makati.

Prior to this, various sectors held mass actions. On July 8, members of the Manila Public School Teachers Association (MPS-TA) and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) launched a mass walkout in the public schools. Youth and students in various schools formed a long human chain. Workers also waged protest actions in their respective factories and government agencies.

In the Visayas, people in Cebu, Negros and Panay—much-vaunted as "Arroyo country"—put the lie to earlier impressions that they supported the fake president's continued stay in power.

One with the demonstrators in Makati City, 2,000 Cebuanos assaulted the detested "Malacañang in Sugbo" at the Aduana Port in Cebu City. The PNP violently dispersed the rally. Despite injuries

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Jokes, ringtones and blogs

Forms and means of people's protest have multiplied as the movement to oust Gloria Arroyo from power gains strength. Ranging from simply playing the "Gloria-Garci" tapes to concocting jokes and ringtones to publishing comprehensive articles, the people have been able to call for Arroyo's ouster as they go about their daily routine. Electronic devices like cellphones and the internet have enabled people to transmit the latest news very quickly, exchange opinions and statements and share common sentiments.

One of the most popular and most entertaining forms of protest is to pass around jokes and banter through cellphones and the internet. They mock not only Arroyo but the so-called democratic institutions that have been strongly defending the regime.

There is a joke for every twist and turn in political issues. When the "Gloria-Garci" tape first came out and Arroyo refused to admit that it was her talking to Garcillano, the joke spread that the reason why she didn't want to say anything was because people might recognize her voice. When Susan Roces denounced Arroyo's sham apology and mentioned the Tagalog saying "ang sinungaling ay kapatid ng magnanakaw" (a liar and a thief are brother and sister), the joke spread that the couple Gloria and Mike Arroyo parted ways because they discovered that they were siblings after all. As to the Arroyo family's involvement in the

jueteng scandal, writers gleefully spread the "news" about the presence of three monsters in Malacañang—the aSAWA (a pun on Mike Arroyo as the *asawa* or spouse and *sawa*-"*boa*"), the BAYAWak (a pun on Iggy Arroyo as the *bayaw* or brother-in-law and *bayawak*-"*iguana*"), and the ANAKonda (a pun on Mikey Arroyo as the *anak* or son and *anakonda*-"*anaconda*"). The longer Arroyo stays in power, the more brutal the jokes become and the more contempt she reaps.

Along with the jokes are the spreading ringtones using Arroyo and Garcillano's well-known voices. The first ringtone to come out and the most popular is entitled "*Buking*" (Exposed), which contains the lines, "Hello, Garci?" and "So will I still lead by one million?" to the accompaniment of a dance tune. The ringtone was so in

demand that the server supplying it crashed several times due to the sheer volume of internet users wanting to download it. In the "*Susan*" ringtone, Susan's "*Hindi ko tinatanggap ang iyong 'sorry'!*" (I do not accept your 'sorry!') seemingly responds to Arroyo's "I am sorry," to the accompaniment of another dance tune. Several dozen ringtones have been created from famous statements made by Arroyo and Susan Roces.

Aside from ringtones and jokes, there are web logs or "blogs"—internet journals that now and then publish stories,



reflections and whatever else their maintainers or "bloggers" want to share. "Blogs" containing essays, stories and other viewpoints focused on the latest chapter of the eroding Arroyo regime have already proliferated. Sometimes, new reports or stories are added several times in one day. Majority of the most beneficial "blogs" are maintained by individuals and groups reporting the stories behind the news—many of them detailed and sensitive inside information not released in the traditional media about developments within Malacañang and other centers of reactionary rule as well as the country's most powerful institutions.

There are "blogs" maintained by progressives that provide explanations on various issues and by lawyers that provide analyses on legal matters. Poets, ordinary students, professionals and persons within and outside the country have also come out with their own "blogs" to vent out their anger against the Arroyo regime. AB

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sustained by some of the rallyists, the protesters were largely unfazed. Meanwhile, in Fuente Osmeña, 200 members of Laban ng Masa launched a separate rally.

Up to 3,000 people gathered in Iloilo City, Aklan and Capiz on July 13.

In Mindanao, hundreds rallied against and assailed a gathering of pro-Arroyo politicians at a hotel in Davao City



on July 12. A thousand protesters massed up for a "cultural rally" on July 13.

In Cagayan de Oro, hundreds marched that same day. In Koronadal, South Cotabato, a campaign kicked off to collect signatures for Arroyo's res-

ignation. Aside from South Cotabato, the signature campaign will be launched in Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

Rallies and other mass actions also took place in General Santos City, Kidapawan, Koronadal, Iligan, Malaybalay and Marawi.

Overseas, Filipino migrants launched an International Day of Action to coincide with the rally in Makati. Mass actions were held in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal in Canada; in New York, Seattle, Los Angeles and San Francisco in the United States; in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau; in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in the Middle East; in New Zealand; and in Switzerland, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Violence marred one of the rallies when two officials and two security guards at the Philippine Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia beat up an organizer of Migrante International during a peaceful picket on July 16. The migrants strongly denounced the mauling. AB

Establishment of the MRLO

The National Democratic Front-Mindanao announced the establishment of the Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization (MRLO) on June 27. The MRLO is the national-democratic underground mass organization for the Moro people and the 16th allied organization of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Its founding congress was held in Central Mindanao and attended by 25 delegates from the 13 ethno-linguistic groups that comprise the Moro people—the Tausug, Maguindanao, Maranao, Yakan, Iranun, Kalagan, Sangil, Samal, Pullun/Jamma Mapun, Kalibungan, Badjao, Molbuganon and Palawani. Comrade Hassan al-Banna, a Maguindanao, was elected MRLO chairperson.

The MRLO originated from the Moro Revolutionary Organization (MORO) which was established in the 1980s amid the broad movement against the Marcos dictatorship. Although it should have been set up a long time ago, the MRLO's establishment today is both timely and historic, because it was born amid the intensified crisis of the country's semi-colonial and semifeudal ruling system and the people's seething struggle against the present reactionary puppet government.

The MRLO's objective is to unite the biggest number of Bangsamoro to advance the struggle to realize their right to self-determination and other democratic rights in solidarity with, and by participating in, the revolutionary struggle of the entire Filipino people for national freedom and democracy. It will thus organize the various sectors of the Moro people, uphold their struggle to resolve their particular and basic problems and help establish guerrilla fronts in areas where there are no other revolutionary Moro organizations operating. It will also recruit Moros to join the New People's Army (NPA).

The NDFP in Mindanao congratulated

the MRLO on its establishment, saying this would further strengthen the armed struggle for self-determination and for national freedom and democracy as well as coordination, unity and cooperation with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and other progressive Bangsamoro organizations.

In its communiqué, the MRLO condemned the continuing injustices suffered by the Moro people. Colonizers and the local ruling classes have betrayed and abused the Bangsamoro, said the MRLO. It also said that certain ruling class Bangsamoro have betrayed the Moro people while protecting their class and clan interests.

The MRLO reviewed history and condemned deceptive and exploitative agreements of the past, such as the Kiram-Bates Treaty during the US imperialist occupation, which formalized US domination of the Moro people, and the GRP-MNLF Tripoli Agreement, which the Marcos dictatorship imposed on the Moro people and which granted sham autonomy to the Bangsamoro.

The delegates recalled the countless atrocities that the Bangsamoro were made to endure, such as the massacre in Bud Dajo in Jolo during the American colonial period, the Jabbidah and Buldon massacres during the time of Marcos, and the burning and destruction perpetrated by the US-Estrada regime on their communities and mosques.

Discrimination and cruelty against the Bangsamoro continue, said the MRLO. The US-Arroyo regime's current all-out war demonstrates the intense cruelty wrought by the ruling classes and US imperialism on the Moro people. There is no respect for the culture and traditions of Filipino Muslims, who are accused of being "terrorists" and victimized by state terrorism. The US imperialists use the war against terrorism to bolster their presence in Mindanao, particularly in Moro areas, and to achieve tighter control over the Philippines and other countries in Southeast Asia.

The MRLO called on the Bangsamoro to struggle to protect their rights against discrimination, chauvinism, violence and oppression. It will use legal and extralegal, open and underground means, and carry out diplomatic initiatives to attain its objectives. But the MRLO clarified that only through revolutionary struggle can the Bangsamoro protect their homeland, attain the respect of other people, and successfully establish political power.

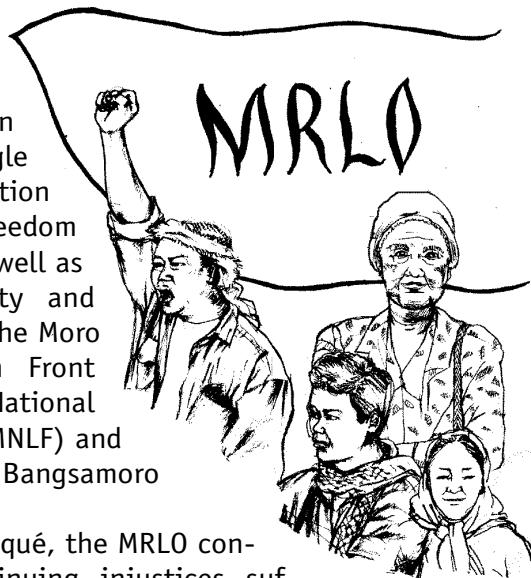
Agrarian revolution advances in Quezon

The agrarian revolution is advancing step by step in Quezon province. Copra producers have been launching a series of negotiations for the past several months in a number of barrios in South Quezon to demand from a big landlord the implementation of certain provisions in the minimum program of agrarian revolution.

The peasants began their inter-barrio campaign in 2004. Through the collective efforts of mass organizations under the Party branches of participating villages and with the help of the New People's Army (NPA), a thorough social investigation was conducted and a campaign plan drafted. They determined which big landlord to target in the struggle to change the system of sharing.

This particular landlord was the biggest hacienda owner, trader and usurer in the area, exploiting residents of several barangays in the province. He owned up to 150 hectares of productive coconut lands. At least a hundred families depended on these lands for their livelihood and housing.

The landlord was quickly able to expand his landholdings by seizing lands offered to him as collateral by lower-middle and middle-middle peasants who were hard up and forced to borrow money from him. They were lands the peasants had inherited from their fore-



bears. The landlord had acquired up to a third of his holdings by foreclosing the lands of peasants who could not make their debt payments.

Before the copra makers launched their struggle, the sharing system prevailing throughout the landlord's property was 60-40 in the landlord's favor, with all expenses shouldered by the copra producers and their helpers. Copra producers usually defray expenses for *pagsungkit* (coconut picking), *pagtapas* (coconut husking), *pagtabas* (cutting down grass and other foliage around the coconut trees), and *pagkarga* (transporting copra to trading stations). Once the copra is sold, the landlord claims his 60% share of the gross earnings. The tenants and their helpers then deduct expenses from the remaining 40% and divide the net income among themselves.

Without lifting a finger, the landlord is able to earn at least ₱5,382 per hectare of coconut land every copra season, and ₱807,300 from the total 150 hectares he owns. Meanwhile, only ₱1,188 per hectare remains for those who did the actual toiling after all expenses are deducted. Dividing this equally, the tenant and his helper each end up with a mere ₱594, too small to pay for debts previously incurred for food and other family expenses.

The same landlord controls the price of copra because he also owns the largest copra trading station in the area. He sets extremely low prices for copra, far lower than the prevailing market price in Lucena City. This enables him to siphon off even more profits from income that rightfully belongs to the peasants.

The landlord takes off 15-25% from the weight of the copra sold to him, claiming that the coconut meat was not dry enough and that

Contractualization in industrial enclaves

The entire length of General Luis St. (from the center of Novaliches to the Malinta North Luzon Expressway Exit) connects three big cities in the National Capital Region contiguous to each other—Quezon City, Caloocan and Valenzuela.

At first glance, the areas around and along General Luis St. look lifeless and ruined—victims of the unbridled onslaught of the neoliberal policy of globalization which has caused the closure of large factories and their transfer to other regions, if not other countries. All around, there are huge warehouses, abandoned buildings, and an assortment of small stores. Unknown to passersby, these establishments conceal the deplorable condition of hundreds of thousands of workers who are brutally exploited and oppressed.

Around General Luis St. and its alleyways are six barangays. An estimated 150,000 workers toil in the factories hemmed in by these communities. Almost all of them are workers involved in semi-manu-

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the remaining moisture makes it heavier than it should be. The deduction is automatic despite the absence of an instrument to measure the dryness of the copra. The landlord also deducts two to four kilos as tare from the copra's weight, depending on whether plastic or jute sacks were used in packing the copra. He also rigs his weighing scales, and conceals the actual weight from the copra makers. Despite all this cheating, copra makers are compelled to sell him their product because of the huge debts they owe him.

The landlord is also constantly on guard against any threats to his interests. Hearing that the people had begun to take action against him, he further revealed his devousness by temporarily agreeing to deduct transport expenses and adopting a 50-50 net sharing scheme. He also tried to expand his feudal influence and preserve the peasants' loyalty to him by presenting himself as godfather during weddings and baptisms.

But the landlord's tricks fell flat in the face of the people's firm unity and collective action. On July 7, the copra producers achieved their first victory.

As a start, they were able to raise their share from 40% to 50% and have the landlord defray the cost of coconut picking and half of the transport expenses.

They were also able to raise the daily wages of coconut pickers from ₱120 to ₱150 and prevailed on the landlord to stop the practice of making deductions on the weight of copra for so-called excess moisture. The old practice of automatically deducting two kilos from the copra's weight when plastic sacks are used was scrapped in favor of actually weighing the sacks before the tare is deducted. The landlord will also henceforth present a clear accounting of how the copra's weight has been calculated, and post the prevailing price of copra. The peasants' right to occupy the land will also be guaranteed.

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facturing or low-grade industry. At least 200 of these factories each employ several hundred low-skilled workers.

One of the largest factories in the area is Rebisco (Republic Biscuit Corporation) which manufactures biscuits and other food items. If one includes its sister factories Nutrisnack, Stateline, JBC Foods (maker of Happy Peanuts) and Pinnacle, Rebisco employs up to 4,000 workers. One other factory is that of Zesto-O, maker of Zest-O Juice and RC Cola. Aside from such food and beverage factories, there are others that manufacture wood and metal furniture; plastic, household, construction, school, and sewing equipment and car accessories, among others.

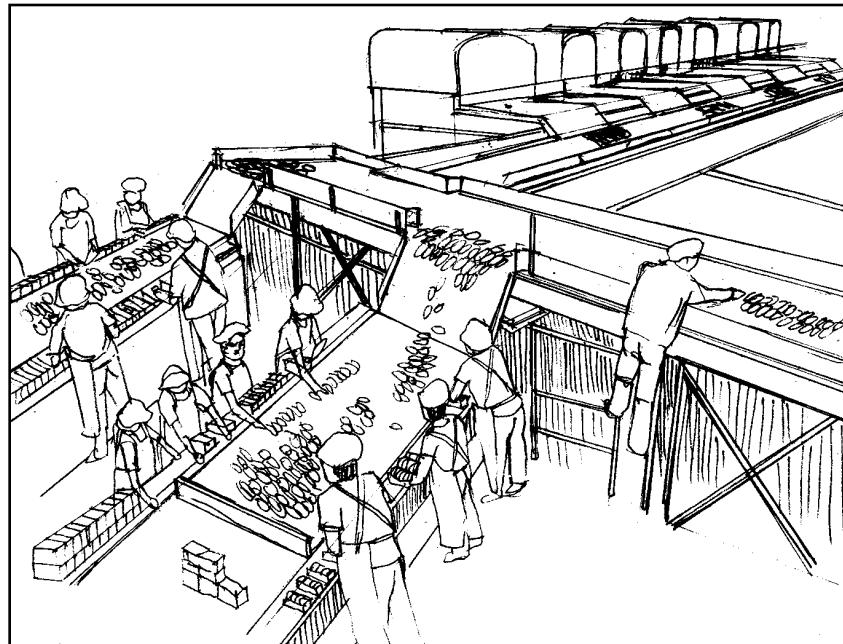
Many of the factories in this enclave are owned by businessmen who are members of the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce Inc. The biggest of them all is Rebisco owner Jacinto Ng, a close friend of Joseph Estrada. He also owns other food and beverage factories, a bank, a high-class subdivision and other real estate within and outside the country. Another big businessman, Alfredo Yao, also owns factories in this area.

Up to 60% of the workers are contractual and casual even if they have been working in the same factory for five or six years. Others transfer from one nearby factory to another. These workers have no hope of ever becoming regular em-

ployees and enjoying job security no matter how long their contract.

The use of employment agencies as an indirect means of labor contractualization is rife in this enclave. These agencies perform the role that human resource departments are supposed to play within factories. Through them, capitalists circumvent laws that forbid the procurement of contractual workers and require them to confer regular status on workers after six months of employment. Instead of becoming regulars, the workers' continued employment is conditioned on their membership in an employment agency.

Capitalists deal with no one



else but these agencies on employment-related matters. Often, the agencies are either associated companies or were established by the capitalists themselves, although they maintain separate identities and registries. The agencies make a show of directly hiring and firing workers, imposing working conditions and paying wages. With the workers seemingly employed by the agencies, capitalists are freed from any obligation.

Agency contracts forbid workers

from joining any association without the company's consent. Any violation of this condition results in their immediate termination. Not surprisingly, whatever unions there are, are company unions. The agencies also warn workers against divulging these conditions to anyone. It even comes to a point when workers are too afraid to even mention the names of the factories they work in and their actual working conditions.

As per the terms of their contracts, agencies deduct a certain percentage from the workers' wages. Thus, even if capitalists pay the minimum wage, they are able to recoup almost half of it through various deductions. This way, the highest pay that any worker receives is ₱115 a day, much less than the already measly ₱275 official minimum daily wage and definitely way below the ₱725 minimum needed by a family of six to meet its daily needs. The agencies even make additional deductions, supposedly to cover certain benefits. But aside from the very few workers enrolled under the Social Security System, the vast majority do not enjoy any benefits or insurance whatsoever.

Factories within the enclave enforce the "no work, no pay" policy. Workers are not entitled to any time off, and sick leaves, maternity leaves and vacation leaves are disallowed. They are not even entitled to a day-off with pay, such as that enjoyed by domestic helpers and service workers.

In the Philippines, there is nothing new about going through

employment agencies (also called placement and recruitment agencies) to find work. Capitalists have long used agencies to employ service workers such as security guards, stevedores, carpenters, seasonal sugar workers, domestic helpers, salesclerks and the like so they could drive down their wages, employ them only on a seasonal basis, and fire them easily for the slightest reason. Agencies have also long been used to recruit docile and cheaply paid workers and domestic helpers for work abroad.

By the 1990s, contractualization had grown widespread as a

means of hiring factory workers and office employees both here in the country and within the entire international capitalist system.

The number of contractual workers has long outstripped the number of regular workers in the Philippines, and their ranks continue to grow.

Large numbers of regular workers are being reduced to the category of the semi-proletariat. This worsens unemployment and underemployment and further brings to the fore the semifeudal character of the economy.

Thus, it is of the utmost importance for workers and the growing number of contractuels and other semi-proletarians to unite with the other democratic classes to overthrow and change the existing exploitative and oppressive semicolonial and semifeudal system in the country. AB

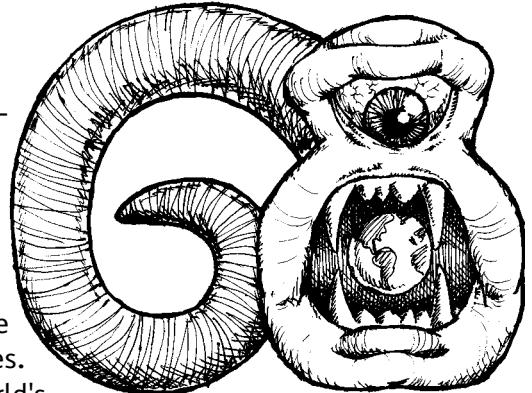
G8: Heaping more insult and injury

Progressive and democratic people worldwide strongly denounced the Group of 8 (G8)'s latest deceptive scheme that purportedly called for the reduction of the debt burdens of the most impoverished countries. The G8, composed of the world's eight richest imperialist countries—the US, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada and Russia—held its most recent meeting in Gleaneagles, Scotland on July 8-9.

One of the G8's false promises involves the "condonation" of \$40 billion of the total external debt of the 18 most indebted countries—a tiny fraction compared to the \$2.3 trillion total external debt of impoverished countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In fact, these countries have already paid their debts severalfold. All they are paying now is the interest that G8 members have imposed. It is the G8 countries' avarice that has caused the \$25 billion owed by the 60 most impoverished countries in 1970 to swell to a whopping \$523 billion by 2002. From 1970-2002, these countries already paid \$550 billion in principal and interest, and yet have \$523 billion left to pay.

Thus, up to 20-25% of the export earnings of poor countries goes to debt payments. But not a single European country allocates over 4% of its export earnings to debt service because it would be inimical to their economies.

The G8's chicanery does not end here. Worse than the insulting "debt condonation" are the conditions imposed by the G8 on



countries whose debts are to be condoned. Among them are so-called anti-corruption measures and reforms designed to impose and implement neoliberal policies towards further investment and trade liberalization, privatization and deregulation. It is these conditions that lie at the root of the backwardness, poverty and indebtedness of the countries that the G8 supposedly wants to bring out of poverty.

A glaring example is provided by countries in sub-Saharan Africa that lost up to \$272 billion in income due to the onslaught of 20 years of trade liberalization, which destroyed local livelihoods. The amount of \$272 billion would have been sufficient to offset the region's total debt of \$204 billion, with enough left over to vaccinate and send every child to school.

In this regard, International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) chair Jose Maria Sison called on the world's peoples to demand the outright cancellation of the total debt of all impoverished countries for the simple reason that they have already been paid many times over.

Sison also cited the need to combat erroneous ideas peddled by social-democrats, bourgeois-liberals, Trotskyites, and NGO reformists and racketeers that im-

perialism is "benevolent, reformable and palatable." It was his reaction to calls by reformists to the G8 to "make poverty history" and reduce the debt of countries in Africa as though the imperialists had a heart and were ready to help

them out.

The problem can only be resolved, he said, if the oppressed peoples and nations and the backward countries uphold and exercise political independence and economic sovereignty against the im-

perialists and their local puppets. They must resist the dictates and the bullying of the imperialist powers who wish to impose social and economic policies through such imperialist agencies as the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organization. They must repudiate and cancel all the odious and onerous foreign debts.

Sison added that "The oppressed peoples and nations are being incited to rise up in armed revolution by the fact that imperialism has reduced them to a life of poverty and misery, due to super-profit-taking and international usury. ... Under the worsening conditions of oppression and exploitation, the proletariat and people of the world are bound to rise up in order to overthrow the system of imperialism."

A hail of protest

Even before the G8 meeting, anti-G8 and anti-imperialist protests were being launched worldwide.

The "March of Whites" was held on July 2 under the auspices of the Global Campaign Against Poverty. Rallyists all over the world wore white and called for an end to poverty and to imperialist wars of aggression in the name of anti-terrorism.

Protests swarmed military bases and embassies of countries belonging to the G8. In South Korea and Japan, rallyists denounced US military presence in Asia and demanded the immediate withdrawal of American troops. In England, submarine bases of the US and UK became venues for protests condemning militarization, wars of aggression and globalization. In the US, protesters at military bases demanded the immediate withdrawal of American troops from

Terrorist bombings rock London

Over 50 people were confirmed to have died and 700 wounded after the terrorist group al-Qaeda detonated bombs on three underground trains and a bus in London, the United Kingdom on July 7.

At exactly 8:50 a.m. in London (4:50 p.m. in the Philippines), four suicide bombers simultaneously detonated bombs in three different train stations, killing 42 people.

Then, at 9:47 a.m.

in London (5:47

p.m. in the Philippines), bombs exploded on a bus in another part of London, killing 14 others.

After the bombings, an organization calling itself the Group of al-Qaeda of Jihad Organization in Europe claimed responsibility. Investigators have identified the four bombers. Three are Britons of Pakistani origin, and the fourth is also a Briton of Jamaican origin.

The International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) strongly condemned the terrorist bombings and extended condolences to the victims and their relatives.

According to ILPS chairman Jose Maria Sison, these violent attacks on ordinary people only

give the imperialists justification to pursue their wars of aggression and obfuscate the terrorist nature of imperialism. The imperialists will also use this to suppress the rights of the people within and outside their own countries in the name of anti-terrorism and thwart the formation of the anti-imperialist unity of all of the world's peoples.

From the very beginning, the ILPS has wholeheartedly supported the struggles of the Palestinian, Arab and other peoples in the Middle East for national freedom and democracy. But it does not condone and support al-Qaeda's terrorism even though its scope is far narrower than the wholesale terrorism of the US and UK's imperialism.

In a separate statement, Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said that "at no time can the targeting of innocent civilians be justified in retaliation for the large-scale repression of the US and British imperialists against the Palestinian, Iraqi and Afghani peoples and many other peoples of the world. The wholesale killing of civilians runs counter to revolutionary principles."

AB



Negotiations with the Arroyo regime are pointless

BOTH the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace panel and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) have declared that negotiating with the Arroyo regime has become meaningless.

In a statement, CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said it was pointless to continue negotiating with a regime on the verge of collapse. The NDFP came out with its stand after the regime unilaterally amended what would have been a joint communiqué on the resumption of formal negotiations this month. Among the statements deleted by the regime were those that raised concern over the CPP, NPA and Jose Maria Sison's inclusion in various "terrorist" listings and over attempts on the lives of NDFP consultants.

These measures were adopted in line with Arroyo's all-out support for the US' "war against terrorism." In the Arroyo regime's four-year existence, it has set up one obstacle after another to prevent the continuation of the peace talks and has trampled on all previously signed agreements.

The NDFP and the CPP said that the peace negotiations have a better chance of succeeding after the Arroyo regime has been ousted from power and replaced by a government more serious and more sincere in advancing the necessary socio-economic, political and constitutional reforms.

"G8...," from page 11

Iraq and Afghanistan.

Various international organizations and artists likewise launched a lively and colorful campaign. A concert dubbed Live8 was held in nine cities in nine countries and joined by 150 bands and artists to raise public consciousness about poverty in Africa.

In Gleneagles, Scotland, tall electric fences stretching several kilometers and thousands of police forces called in to protect the G8 meeting failed to stop the throng of demonstrators. For two days, rallyists played run-and-chase and clashed with the police who tried in vain to break up the protest actions. AB

Mayor masterminds murder of Davao del Norte councilor

THE New People's Army Armando Dumandan Command (NPA-ADC) in the Southern Mindanao Region's Front 33 belied accusations that the NPA was behind the killing of Councilor Virgilio Lacia of New Corella, Davao del Norte. The NPA said that Lacia, a progressive and nationalist councilor, was ordered killed by none other than New Corella's fascist mayor Jose Federiso. Lacia was murdered while on his way home on July 16 by four motorcycle-riding gunmen.

NPA-ADC spokesperson Marcella Valiente said the people of New Corella were familiar with Lacia's pro-people stand on local and national issues. In contrast, Federiso is known for his brutal, fascist and counterrevolutionary stand and has a long record of eliminating his perceived enemies. Aside from Lacia, a political rival who garnered the second highest votes as councilor in May 2004, Federiso's victims include worker and peasant activists. It was customary for Federiso to blame the revolutionary movement for the killings.

Among those ordered killed by Federiso was Remigio Rebaja, a peasant leader, who was murdered on April 10. Before this, he also ordered the killing on June 21, 2003 of Mateo Sarte, a worker leader and councilor of Barangay San Roque, and Baltazar Medino, another resident of San Roque.

Bayan Muna member in Pangasinan murdered

A gunman killed Mapandan, Pangasinan vice mayor and Bayan Muna (BM) member Adolfo Aquino, 56, on July 6. Aquino is the 56th BM member or supporter killed since April 2001 and the tenth killed this year.

Aquino was shot by an unidentified gunman after presiding over a meeting of the Sangguniang Bayan. He sustained seven bullet wounds. The assailant also shot Aquino's driver, Victor Villanueva, who died in the hospital while undergoing an operation.

Militarization in EV alarms churches

AN international council of Protestant churches expressed alarm over the military's rampant violation of human rights in Eastern Visayas.

A six-person team from the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC) headed for Samar after being invited by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). The WCC talked to the families of victims of human rights violations as well as human rights advocacy groups. (The military had killed a church leader, Rev. Edison Lapuz of the UCCP on May 12 in San Isidro, Leyte.)